

BLUNT INSTRUMENTS

Nr. 2

CIRCULATION: 37

DECEMBER 14th, 1986

Welcome back to *Blunt Instruments*, the best 'zine in the known world, and probably outside of that as well. If, for some reason, you don't agree with me, I suggest that you are in some way mentally defective, and I would prefer not to associate with defectives. Before you howl and scream about the injustice of it all, remember which editor you told to be less self-effacing!

This, dear readers, was to be a spectacular second issue. Not only was it to be that, but it was going to be even better than #1. Unfortunately, I don't think I've made it, and I'll explain why. The week which just ended was finals week, and a more draining finals week this publisher has seldom seen. My plans, which were to finish the 'zine after finals and leave for home on Saturday, were rather rudely upset when I literally collapsed from exhaustion on Friday afternoon. After a long nap (a *very* long nap), I decided that there was no way for me to finish in time to leave on Sunday afternoon. Even after a long session yesterday and a longer one today, I have barely scratched the surface of what I was planning to cover. Not only did I have to cut the letter column short (it was chopped to a mere eighteen pages), but I was forced to curtail my discussion of houserules, and postpone my two pet projects—a discussion of the Iran/contra scandal for the *Soapbox*, and an analysis of how *Once Upon a Deadline* helped to shape *BI*. Both are scheduled for the upcoming issue, and a continuation of both the letters and the houserules discussion should see print. With all of the positive response to #1, I had hoped that #2 would not let anyone down. Perhaps it won't, but it certainly wasn't what I expected.

Perhaps it is fitting that I will have a long winter break to straighten matters out. With all of that free time on my hands, I will probably be able to write several pieces for future issues, saving myself the effort when school starts again. In addition, I will be getting a jump on schoolwork by reading a few books that I'll have to tackle next quarter. (Riasanovsky's *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought* is one that I'm especially looking forward to.) I might even get to Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* (which I have been planning to re-read for a long time). In short, it will be a busy break.

I will be moving to another apartment in the same building immediately after winter break. The new one has a bigger, sunnier bedroom and a larger kitchen. This means that any mail that will reach me after January 4th should be addressed to my new address which will be the same as before, except that the apartment number will be 206. In the meantime, I will be relaxing at home in Michigan. *I would really prefer that no mail be sent to Michigan (especially orders) unless it needs to be taken care of right away.* I am having my mail stopped at the Post Office while I am gone, and I will pick it up immediately upon my return, so there should be no problems with lost mail. Nevertheless, against my better judgment, I will supply my home address to those of you who might need to take care of a problem: 2751 Woodbine Drive, Pontiac, MI 48054; (313) 682-3293. I won't be responsible for lost orders. Be safe—mail them to Chicago! Tired as I am of making blanket "Happy Holidays" wishes to several people at once, I won't do that here, as I don't wish to be thought insincere. Have happy ones anyway!

Blunt Instruments is a vehicle for world revolution posing as a poorly-written Diplomacy journal. Its publisher and editor is a young pseudo-intellectual named Bruce Geryk, residing at 5748 S. Blackstone Ave. #310, Chicago, Illinois, 60637, who is so desperate to see his name in print that he will probably send all BI subscribers a copy of his Ph.D. dissertation (with postage due, no doubt). His telephone number is (312) 324-6460, and he always appreciates calls to tell him how wonderful his 'zine is. Subscriptions are \$1.10 for single issues, or \$10 for ten. Residents of countries other than the United States receive two free issues upon subscribing for ten. There is no extra charge for airmail delivery. Diplomacy is a trademark of the Avalon Hill Game Company and was invented by Allan Calhamer, who is not to be confused with Charles the Hammer, who was a different person entirely.

the arena

Two games, twenty applicants for gamestarts. There seems to be a bit of a disparity here between the number of players I originally envisioned and the number that want to play.

Fortunately for me (for now), I did not have to decide whether or not to open a third game. So far, six players have signed up for the (as yet) nonexistent gamestart, so I suppose that the final reckoning will come sooner or later. Anyone who wishes me to return his sub money because he was not placed in a game is welcome to a refund, although I hope that this was not the only reason anyone subbed to *BI*. The ultimate decision will probably be based on when the orphan ends. I don't want to run more than three games at a time, for reasons of overextension. Should the orphan end soon, I will open another game. You would be well advised, however, not to hold your breath.

One of my reasons for not overextending myself (besides the obvious one of burnout) is that I do not want to let the size of the 'zine in general affect the games that I run. I am very much committed to giving players their game reports immediately after the deadline, as I don't believe that players in a non-warehouse 'zine should be penalized just because they share space with a lot of chat. In short, you will be getting a flyer from me which I will probably mail by the Sunday after the deadline. Despite all of the hype about emphasis on reading material, I *do* want to have well-run games.

There were are fair number of titles mentioned in response to my solicitaion of suggestions concerning alternate games which I could feature in *BI*. *Civilization* seems to have the most supporters, with *Pax Britannica* not far behind. Unfortunately, I cannot offer both, so *Pax Britannica* must yield for the moment. Most of the people who mentioned *Pax* mentioned *Civ* as well, so I don't think many of you should be disappointed. It is decided, then—I hereby open one (and *only* one) game of the wonderful *Civilization*. I can take seven players, as well as some standbys. There will be a game fee of \$5.00. Once the game fills, I will provide pbm rules to all the players, and they will also be available for general perusal, provided one asks for them (and I have composed them by then).

I would also dearly love to open an *Awful Green Things From Outer Space* game as well. However, as has been pointed out by Several Who Know, that I would have to run the thing on two-week deadlines in order to make it work. Each player would have two weeks to do his move, and this would work out to one turn a month. Unfortunately, I am deathly afraid of taking on too much. Two weeks turnaround times might prove to be too much for me, so I'm shelving this for the moment. I did get some interest, though, so I plan on opening a game sometime. Perhaps soon. Who knows.

As for my other inspirations, they will also have to wait, I'm afraid. Don't get me wrong—I am sure I would enjoy running all sorts of other games, including *1830*, *Empire Builder*, *Pax Britannica*, *Kingmaker*, and *Cold War*. Unfortunately, I do not have that much free time. There was a period in high school when I was playing something like fifteen games (things like *Flat Top*, *Afrika Korps*, and *Panzer Leader*) by mail. Those days are long gone, I'm afraid. For now, I'll content myself with this sojourn into the GMing world. Please keep you suggestions coming in, though, as I'm always glad to hear what the latest trends in pbm are (I'm just the sort to worry about being trendy). One of these days, though, if I can get enough players for a *War & Peace* campaign....

It has also been brought to my attention that Scott Cameron (of *Protozoan* fame) runs several non-Dip games in that 'zine (such as *Kingmaker* and *Civilization*), and runs them well. Anyone who would rather not wait for me to open more games can always write to Scott (4 Meadow Lane, Hicksville, NY 11801) and inquire further.

Aside from all of this, we always have *Diplomacy*.

SO YOU SAY YOU WANT GAMES....

As I promised, *BI* games will be named after boroughs of Warsaw. Unfortunately, the map that was going to accompany these games couldn't be included in this issue, again due to reproduction problems (this time, I couldn't get the proper color copies). Next time, I guess. I will mention that because Fred Chang remembered the name of one Warsaw borough from his trip to Poland, his game is named for it.

My standby list consists of Gary Coughlan, Ted Davis, Randy Grigsby, Brian Kegerreis, and Rodney Schmisseur. Each of these fine gentlemen receives one free issue of *BI* for agreeing to be on the standby list. Not only that, but should any standby orders be required of these standbys, they will receive one free issue for submitting them. Finally, should they be asked to take over a position, and they play it out to the end, three free issues are theirs. *BI* is full of fringe benefits. Standbys are asked to look through the player lists and advise me if there is a game for which they don't want to be called as a standby. Likewise, players should tell me if there are any standbys which they don't want to be called for their game. Of course, standbys will not be called upon to assume positions in games in which they are already playing.

1986??

Zoliborz

Fall, 1900

AUSTRIA: Gary Coughlan, 4614 Martha Cole Lane, Memphis, TN 38113

ENGLAND: Robert O'Donnell, P.O. Box 272, Bonanza, OR 97623-0272

FRANCE: Hugh Christie, 43 E. Houston St., Montgomery, PA 17752-1104

GERMANY: Fred Chang, 822 N. Sycamore Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90038

ITALY: Brian Kegerreis, 68 Bulard Loop, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027

RUSSIA: Richard Hurley, 341 Wolf Creek Road, Grass Valley, CA 95945

TURKEY: Randy Grigsby, R.R. #2, 571 Sunnidale Rd., Barrie, Ontario, Canada L4M 4S4

Please see the gamenotes listed after the Mokotow gamestart.

1986??

Mokotow

Fall, 1900

AUSTRIA: D. Claude Morest, 18 Shady Lane, West Simsbury, CT 06092

ENGLAND: Gary Richardson, 9514 Wythal Lane, Burke, VA 22015

FRANCE: Melinda Holley, P.O. Box 2793, Huntington, WV 25727

GERMANY: Kevin Tighe, 2351 Westwood Court #F-8, Arcata CA 95521

ITALY: Jack McHugh, 280 Sanford Road, Upper Darby, PA 19082

RUSSIA: Jeff Zarse, 1 N. Stonegate, Lake Forest, IL 60045

TURKEY: Alan Blaine, 15090 El Capitan Way, Delhi, CA 95315

The addresses listed for Gary Richardson and Jeff Zarse are effective for the winter holidays only. Beginning January 4th, 1987, their addresses will be:

Gary Richardson: 5440 S. Ingleside, Chicago, IL 60615

Jeff Zarse: Hinman Box 284, Hanover, NH 03755

GAMENOTES

1. Because of my policy regarding 1901 NMR's, this is Fall, rather than Spring, 1900. Orders are due from all of you by Friday, January 16, 1987. Unless all seven players in a game submit orders and vote against an extension, the Spring,

1901 deadline for that game will be extended to Friday, February 13, 1986. This deadline is five weeks away due to the holiday season. Press may be submitted for Winter, 1900 (the next season, should an extension occur). Those of you who are superstitious had better hope that the deadline is not extended. For the deadline extension to fail, all seven players in a game must vote against the extension. *No Vote Received is considered to be a vote against the extension.* No Moves Received automatically makes the extension take effect (after all, what is this extension business about, anyway?).

2. The Gamemaster for all of this is Bruce Geryk, 5748 S. Blackstone #310, Chicago, IL 60637-1882. Telephoned orders are due by 1:00 AM Central Time on the day of the deadline.
3. Houserules will be mailed to the players as soon as the GM is done fiddling with them. The only thing changing from the "2¹/₂ Commandments" section from last issue is that it will be easier to get a separation of seasons, so there should be no complaints. Basically, I am working on making them a bit less strict.



(continued from *Amusements*)

to appear and disappear much faster, so that the reader would have to focus too much attention on the screen, and would have difficulty reading, besides. Either solution would compromise the effect of the words, and the performance would truly be "invaded."

One thing that bothers me is that Cassidy seems to completely disregard the fact that many people would like to actually know what is being said during the opera. After all, the reason that Italian operas were written in Italian was in part due to fact that they were *meant* to be understood. While Italian does lend itself to opera more readily than English, it seems pretty silly to sing a song that no one understands. What would Cassidy say if the lyrics were changed to tonal sounds which more closely reflected the music? If she were to object, I must point out that here argument seems to be concerned with the inviolability of the music and the voice; to her, the story is secondary.

In any case, language in opera (as in any case where words are sung rather than spoken) is necessarily altered. Clear enunciation is sometimes the antithesis of music, and this is reflected in the degree to which one can understand exactly what is being said. Unless the language being sung is the native language of both the singer and the listener, some content is going to be lost. I have heard operas in Polish, English, and Russian, and I don't remember ever being able to catch everything that was said, even when the singers were Polish and the opera was in Polish. It is not necessary. In view of this, Cassidy's argument that an absolutely faithful translation (an often unattainable ideal) is necessary becomes even weaker.

What I really suspect is at the heart of Cassidy's argument, though, is the fear that opera will become too accessible. It has too long been the case that the only people who went to the opera were those who either saw it as an expression of their own elitism, had enough desire for understanding that they thoroughly familiarized themselves with the libretto, were well-versed in the Romance languages, or loved it so much that they were willing to put up with not being able to understand it (although I doubt that even that last category would gain Cassidy's approval—she probably being a member of the first). Now, people who like the music will be able to sit in the same opera hall, and understand nearly as much as those who known the language or memorized the libretto, and just as much as those who see it solely as a "superior cultural experience." Her implication is that there is a prerequisite for the appreciation of opera which necessarily excludes "common" people. Perhaps she believes that one must "work" for the pleasure that opera imparts (such as memorizing a libretto or learning Italian), and that this means some sort of sacrifice on the opera-goer's part. The logical extension of this argument is that to truly appreciate opera, one must be able to sing. Not only is this ridiculous, but it probably excludes even Ms. Cassidy. I wonder if she is even aware of this. Probably not.

Game? What game?

This marks the institution of "The Great **BI** Map Experiment." I always like to see well-done maps included with game reports, as it makes it more fun for me to follow the game in question when I'm not playing. I do *not*, however, like poorly-drawn maps. For me, a bad-looking map (even if it is correct) actually *detracts* from the game report—*no* map being preferable to one which doesn't please the eyes. Consequently, I refrained from putting a map in **BI** #1. First, I was afraid that it would look bad, and second, I didn't want to make it appear that I was making it some sort of policy. However, I thought I just might be able to provide a reasonably attractive map eventually, and here it is. The map is not computer-generated—I did it by hand. Consequently, it was a bit time-consuming, but I am generally pleased with the result. The border could use some touching-up, but still.... Anyway, let me know what your reactions are. Please.

1985AQ

The Integral Trees

Summer, 1905

Fra: A rom r TUS.

Fall, 1905

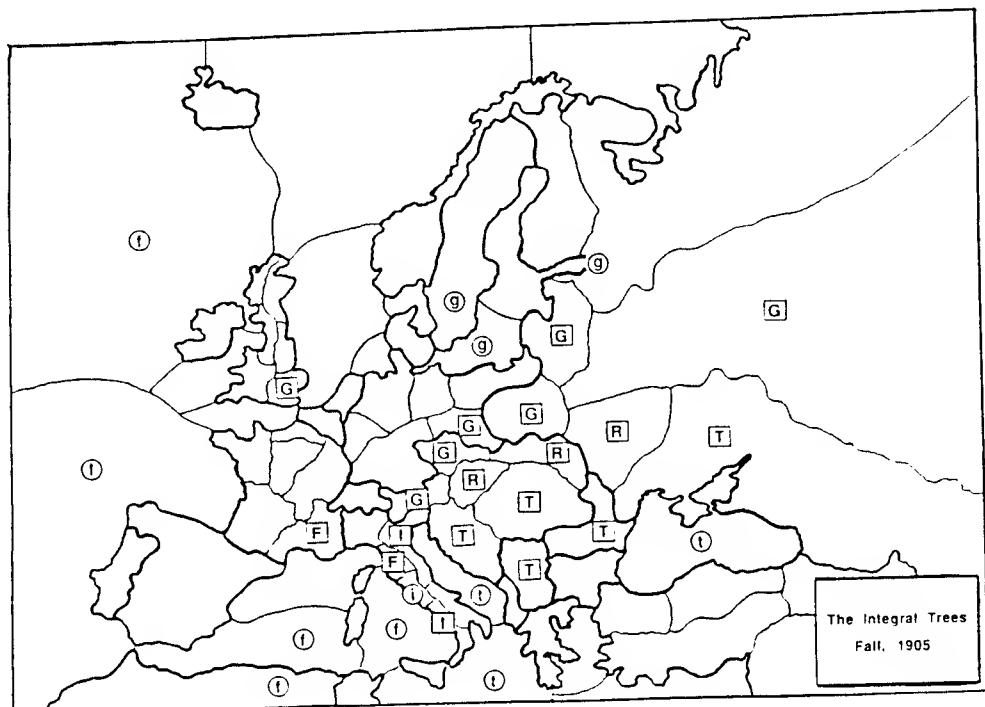
FRANCE (*Holley*) A TUS S nap-rom (amb), A gas-MAR, F mid-NAF, F cly-NAT, F iri-MID, F lyo-TYN, F nap-rom (*poof!*), F WES-tun.

GERMANY (*Hakey*) A LON drinks tea, A LVN S A MOS, A MOS S A WAR, A WAR S A BOH-gal, A BOH-gal, A ber-SIL, A TYO-ven, F STP(SC) drinks vodka, F nwy-SWE, F kie-BAL

ITALY (*McCrumb*) A apu-NAP, F ROM S A apu-NAP, A VEN S F ROM.

RUSSIA (*Crow?*) NMR! A UKR H, A GAL H, A VIE H.

TURKEY (*Chang*) F ION-tun, F ADR-ion, A TRI-tyo, A BUD-gal, A RUM S A BUD-gal, A SER-bud, A SEV S Russian A ukr-mos (nso), F BLA S A SEV.



1985AQ Supply Center Chart — 1905

FRANCE	par, mar, bre, spa, por, edi, lvp, <u>rom</u>	7, even
GERMANY	ber, kie, mun, hol, den, swe, bel, lon, war, nwy, MOS, STP.....	12, +2
ITALY	nap, tun, ven, ROM.....	4, +1
RUSSIA	<u>stp</u> , <u>mos</u> , vie.....	1, -2
TURKEY	con, ank, smy, bul, gre, ser, rum, sev, tri, bud.....	10, +2

***** Gamenotes *****

1. Once again, Winter, 1905/Spring, 1906 orders are due by 8PM CDT, Friday, January 9th, 1987. An F-G-T draw is proposed. Remember, if you don't vote, you vote "no" (except for NMR's).
2. Fred Chang is the new Turkish player. No standby is being called for Russia..
3. As you can tell, the "Mark Berch Rule" was not used for the Russian NMR. This is due to a question of regularity. A request for a ruling from the BNC, Steve Heinowski, is pending. See details elsewhere.
4. I should explain the failure of the French move from Naples to Rome. According to houserule V.3 (under "Interpreting Orders: Type of Unit," it says that "All units, whether fleets or armies, must be labeled as such." In the French orders, "F Nap-Rom" was specified, but in the support order, the "F" was omitted. Curiously, the same problem occurred in the last issue of *Praxis* (#10). There, Alan Stewart gave the following argument:

Although I dislike to add requirements to the Rulebook and considered not requiring unit specification, I found the practical results of this practice difficult to accept. For example, if you never *require* unit specification then you certainly couldn't penalize an *incorrect* specification, could you? And once I let people order A Kie-Ber when they really have F Kie you are asking for confusion. So I considered that the benefit to the Gamemaster of requiring unit specification outweighed the cost to the players."

I agree completely with Alan's reasoning here. Fortunately, in the *Praxis* instance, the case made no difference, as the result would have been the same one way or another. Here, however, things are different. Had the specification not been omitted, the French move to Rome would have succeeded, and both France and Italy would be even. I'm sorry that this ruling changes the result, but I strongly believe in the reasoning behind this, and it *was* in the houserules.

PRESS: Germany to GM: Heh! My last bit of press should have read "Germany to England & Austria: R.I.P." That's okay, though.

GM to Germany: Excuse me, but I typed what you had written down. Freudian slip?

Germany to world: Come on, folks—let's see some press!

Germany to Russia: Most excellent dying speech, but you're not dead yet, oh Czar! Wait 'til Winter at least...and in the interim maybe you can regain some prestige?

GM to Germany: Maybe he was scared away by the new 'zine?

France to Germany: No change in game plan.

You want to know what I've been listening to while doing the game adjudication? Sure you do. Depeche Mode, *Black Celebration*; Shriekback, *The Infinite*; Talking Heads, *True Stories*; Genesis, *Selling England by the Pound*, *A Trick of the Tail*; Lombard, *Zwolnione Od Cla*. Wicked filler, eh?

The following is an allusion which few (if any) of you will understand, so bear with me when I say

THIS WAY TO THE HOUSERULES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

As I announced in the last issue, I plan on using the Mark Berch Rule, or "War by Automatic Pilot" rule, concerning the handling of NMR's, in games to be run in *BI*. This rule is very new (as far as I know, only *BI* and *Praxis* are currently using it), and I have opened this column as a forum for the discussion of the relative merits of the system. Many of the replies simply stated "Yes, I like the rule" or "No, I don't." However, the following letters delved into the subject in more detail:

* * * * *

Robert Olsen: I'm very dubious about your houserule regarding NMR's. NMR is the bane of everybody's existence, but it's not the GM's job to devise tricks to generate pseudo-orders, either. Allowing quasi-standing orders might actually tend to *lower* interest in the game rather than raise it, particularly in a late-game stalemate situation. I say let those who want to play, play, and if they don't, get somebody who does.

Mark Berch: I don't think the GM is "interfering." That requires the use (some would say "abuse") of GM discretion. You are following exactly what the player wrote. You have no decisions to make. In essence, your houserules provide that any season's orders provide an automatic tentative set of orders for the following season. Players who sign up for *BI* games presumably understand and consent to this, so the orders *aren't* considered good only for that season.

Andy Lischett: I hate your NMR houserule.

Your rule does not correct a defect in the game; it just tries to make each game conform to your standards by minimizing an aspect of the game which you don't like, even though you are not playing. You (the GM) have no idea of the NMRing player's intent at the time he NMR's, so in effect you are writing his orders. That is GM interference in a big way. Even if you had any business deciding what is "good" for your players (which you don't), your rule won't achieve the results you want. It will rarely help tenacious defenders as you intend, because tenacious defenders rarely NMR. Mostly you will help bored defenders and mindless suiciders at the *expense* of tenacious players. I've been GMing for a while (you young whipper-snapper!) and know that most NMR's come from uninterested players who put little thought into the orders they submit. Your rule will prop them up and their lack of interest will infect the enthusiastic players. I'm happy to see unwanted centers go to players interested in using them.

There are other problems.

Let's say Germany is a two-center Tenacious Defender besieged by England and Russia. T.D. gets lucky in the spring and loses nothing to either attacker, but he can't fight them both, so he begs and reasons and pleads with Russia to leave him alone so that he can effectively fight England. Russia agrees. Germany orders all units west. Russia NMRs. Tough luck, Germany—the GM just attacked you.

Maybe in the example above, Russia was initially allied with England and unsuccessfully supported him into Mun, while at the same time England stabbed Russia by taking Nwy. Now the NMR has Russia successfully support his new enemy (England) against his new ally (Germany). While negotiating under your rule, Germany not only has to worry about a Russian stab, but he must also worry about a Russian NMR (perhaps intentional!).

More examples: England has 17 centers and, instead of being tenacious, Germany hardly cares. Russia cares, and wants to stop England. In the spring England orders A par-BUR and A RUH S A par-BUR, Russia orders A war-SIL, and Germany orders A MUN-bur and says that he is tired of the game and from now on all of his units will hold. To stop England, Russia submits fall orders supporting Germany's A Mun in holding. Germany NMRs and Mun is ordered to attack Bur, which

macintalk

Several of you have commented on the high physical quality of this publication. This is one of those things that I can't take any personal credit for. Instead, it is entirely due to circumstances—the fact that I work in a computer lab which not only has several Macintoshes, but an Apple LaserWriter to go with them. Such technology.

Putting this thing together is not really that difficult. The capabilities of the computer make moving text and graphics extremely easy, so the things that look like they took forever to put together really didn't. What can be a little annoying is the fact that I have two use text and graphics from more than one application, but that will be explained below.

For those of you who asked, this is done using three applications: *MacWrite*, *Word*, and *MacDraw*. Originally, I was doing the entire thing in *MacWrite*, but this proved to be impractical. The large lettering that I use for the titles of sections (see the top of this page) is too large for *MacWrite* to handle. Consequently, I was doing the headers in *MacDraw* and then pasting them into *MacWrite*. However, the LaserWriter has some difficulty processing documents when two or more applications are used together, so the *MacDraw* elements ended up lengthening each page's processing/printing time considerably. After a little of this, I switched to *Word* for pages which have the large lettering on them (one of *Word*'s several advantages is that lettering can be of any size, not just the pre-determined sizes to which *MacWrite* restricts the user). I still use *MacDraw* for things like the linear separators and the line under the title of the 'zine. On the whole, the system is surprisingly easy to integrate.

Part of the advantage of using a Mac is that the Apple LaserWriter is probably the best printer around for anything like an affordable price. The fact that Apple had the foresight to install commercially licensed fonts, which make printed copies look nearly professional. This fact alone would make it superior to printers like the Hewlett-Packard Laserjet, but Apple also decided to make the darn thing programmable. Anyone who has any real desire to get fancy with the LaserWriter is advised to pick up the *Guide to PostScript* (available from Apple for \$75). In short, if you want to better the LaserWriter's performance, figure on paying around ten times as much for a product which only improves on performance by around two or three times.

The only real disadvantage to the Mac (as far as the consumer is concerned) is the fact that there will never be any Mac "clones" in the way that there currently are IBM clones. The reason for this is that Apple designed, and thus has exclusive rights to, their operating system (the System/Finder combination). Microsoft, not IBM, designed PC-DOS. That's why PC-DOS will be called MS-DOS if it is purchased with anything except an IBM PC. Microsoft gave IBM non-exclusive rights to DOS, so anyone who produced a motherboard like the IBM's can get licensing to use DOS from Microsoft (and it is to Microsoft's advantage to have as many companies as possible using DOS, for obvious reasons). In the Mac's case, however, even if someone produced an identical motherboard, there would be nothing to run the computer (legally, that is). This should insure that Apple does not become subject to the proliferation of clones that have undercut IBM prices.

The good news, though, is that Apple is phasing out the 512E Mac. This means that the Mac+ will be come the low end of the line, and will probably see a drop in price. I have no idea what the new "high-end" product is going to be, but it probably will not be the proposed 16Mg "Jonathan," which reportedly died in development.

One other product note: Microsoft is apparently going to be doing another (long-overdue) update of *Word* (to be version 3.0). Once it comes out, it is being said that there will be no reason to use *MacWrite* anymore. The reason that many people (like me) continue to use *MacWrite* at all is that the advantages *Word* offers are not so great that they entirely counterbalance the fact that *Word* is considerably clumsier to use. The update will apparently be so powerful that the clumsiness will be worth it. I remain to be convinced.

attacks Mun with support and wins the game for England.

Maybe these situations seem unlikely, but added up (with different units, different countries) they are more likely than the possibility of your rule saving the heroic little guy who got messed up by the Post Office.

You also limit the resourcefulness of players with this rule. I (and others) *like* NMR's, because *I* don't NMR. I have played in good games where one or more players caused other players to NMR (through trickery or harrassment or tenacity) and don't think a GM should limit any player's "negotiating" options.

I guess just maybe we have different views. You see losses due to an NMR as a disruption to be smoothed out by Big Brother, while I see them as a natural consequence of bad playing to be exploited by good playing. You probably play *Monopoly* with rent control.

An alternative to your rule is to allow, and maybe even encourage, players to provide their own insurance orders. Suggest that they submit perpetual orders such as "If I ever NMR, repeat the previous season's orders" or "all units support each other, with units able to support more than one other unit supporting the closest one to a home center and alphabetically if equidistant from a home center." This would let *players* protect themselves in any legal way they want.

Anyway, I predict that if you keep your NMR rule you will have (1) unusually long games, (2) a lot of bored and unhappy players (their own fault for joining a game with this rule) and (3) a larger number of NMR's than usual.

Okay, I'm done. You may now rip my arguments to shreds. I almost didn't write this letter because I'm intimidated by the debating ability of both you and Alan Stewart (who also adopted this dumb rule), but I've looked silly before, and it doesn't really hurt.

* * * * *

Well! Not exactly an overwhelmingly positive response, was it? To tell the truth, I had not expected so many dissenting opinions (gee, guys, *I* liked the rule!), but that's the way it goes. Perhaps I shouldn't be so naive.

In case you were wondering, Andy's last paragraph was left in for a reason. I don't want *anyone* to refrain from writing to this august publication simply because they think I am going to gratuitously demolish their arguments. Not only is this ridiculous, but it is not terribly likely, either.

So, what do I think? Basically, my position on the rule is fairly similar to Mark's: in most games, players are allowed to submit orders for more than one season at a time, so players in *BI* would simply play with the understanding that their orders for one season constituted automatic tentative orders for the next. I didn't foresee any *problems*, though, until Andy spoke up.

Andy has raised some excellent points. First of all, player apathy may be promoted (and there is much too much of that already), since the penalty for NMR's (generally a severe weakening of one's position) is dramatically reduced. The natural "fear" of NMR's will be correspondingly reduced, and a general increase in player sloppiness might result. Not a particularly pleasant prospect.

On the other hand, there are some advantages to "mobile NMR's." If you are concerned with the effect of the new rule on NMR's which have been "induced" in some way (a tactic, incidentally, which I consider to be of dubious effectiveness), Andy, then the trade-off becomes the fact that the NMR is now a real *offensive* weapon. Consider the England/Germany/Russia scenario with England having fewer centers, Germany having a few more, and the German being very much in the game. Assume, also, that it is to Russia's tactical and strategic advantage to pick up a few German centers while not precluding a possible future alliance with Germany later on. After the initial attack, Russia convinces Germany that he will support his against England. Germany is convinced, and does not defend against a possible Russian stab. Russia NMRs. "Deadline? This week?! I thought I had another week left! Berlin? Oh, of course you can have it back next year; I didn't mean to take it...."

(continued on page 28)

amusements

I do not consider myself to be a “music snob.” Although my training in music theory often makes me (perhaps unjustly) cringe when uneducated people pretend to be authoritative music critics, I generally try my best to be tolerant, and I do have a healthy dislike for those people (several of whom I have met here) who turn theory into the sole standard by which to judge music. It disturbed me, then, to read the following portion of an article, excerpted from Claudia Cassidy’s “On the Aisle” column in the November *Chicago* magazine:

Voice may be the most magical word in the language, at least in my corner of the world where the human voice, the instrumental voice, and that necromantic variation known as voicing—whether of the great bell, the carillon, or the company of players—can share the accumulated wealth of the universe. A great voice speaks to the world, and no one knows exactly how that happens. It is a gift from some heaven merciful to the loneliness of man. True quality implies the gift of communication, whether the voice immortalizes the poet, the playwright, the composer, or as sometimes happens, all of them together. Your true voice can fill any space. Maggie Teyte once did that when booked in error in Civic Opera House recital. I asked her how she did it and she said, “I just sang slower.”

But such projection is becoming a lost art, and what we don’t use we can lose. In this age of the microphone—which fortunately has not yet invaded the opera house or the classic concert hall—the voiceless proliferate, blasting. What is invading the opera house is that string of English translations running across the top of the proscenium. They often are crude, coy, inaccurate, and badly timed, so that it is possible for the audience to react to something not yet on stage. This is an inexcusable distraction to the caring audience. It destroys that resonant triangle between stage, orchestra pit, and audience, undercutting eloquent performance and wrecking what can be—on the best nights, priceless rapport. Imagine your eyes leapfrogging to a bad translation while Lotte Lehman sang the Marchallin’s monologue. On second thought, better not.

I just happened to be at one such “invaded” Lyric Opera performance this year at Chicago’s Civic Opera House—Puccini’s *La Bohème*. What Cassidy is referring to is a rectangular projection screen, located, as she says, at the top middle of the proscenium and taking up about one-third of the horizontal space. Far from being an “invaded performance,” I found it to be nothing of the sort.

Cassidy’s main objection seems to be that the projections force one’s attention away from the stage and focus it on the words being shown above. While it is admittedly my opinion when I say that I disagree, I cannot see how she can make a realistic case. The screen is a greyish-black, with the projected words being a subdued white. This causes the screen, in a dark opera house, to meld with the proscenium, leaving only the words really visible. The screen does not extend downward very far, so it can hardly be said to interfere with one’s vision. In fact, if one sits anywhere except in the balcony, it is necessary to tilt one’s head a bit (or at least appreciably move the eyes) to read what is being projected. Even in the balcony, if one fixes one’s attention of the stage, the screen is, for all purposes, invisible. In other words, if one wants to ignore the words, one is perfectly free to do so. Anyone who is distracted by the screen is probably more concerned with its existence, and not its effects.

Cassidy complains that the translations are crude and inaccurate (which implies that her definition of “inaccurate” does not necessarily include “crude”). I compared the projected translations to the ones in my libretto (which was acknowledged as a good translation). While it is true they were not of literary quality, they did convey the gist of the message, and were far from crude. The practical reason for this is that the screen only has a limited amount of space. If the projection were to include everything in the libretto, the screen would either have to be considerably larger, so that the words would all fit and stay visible long enough to be comfortably read, or the words would have

the courier

This issue's installment of *The Courier* is quite large—larger than I had planned. Part of this is due to the commitment I made to printing all of your letters in Issue #2. I do not for one moment regret this decision; I am very grateful to all of you who took the time to be supportive and write to me. I think that has been the most satisfying aspect of publishing so far—the pleasure one receives upon learning that others find one's work enjoyable. Unfortunately, I couldn't fit everything in. I grossly underestimated the response that I would get, and I simply was unable, due to space limitations, to put everyone's letters in this issue. I'll put the remaining letters in #3 & #4. Anyone who would prefer that I not print old letters should let me know.

The real reason for this section's bulk, though, is the fact that I was quite liberal with my comments, as the proliferation of brackets and italics shows. In fact, I believe that I may have gone overboard with editorial license; my interruptions will probably be just as annoying to someone who just wants to read an uncut letter as it would have been to simply chop the letter up. While I did try to restrain myself, I had quite a bit to say in some cases. I think that in future issues I will figure out what level of editorial response works best. For now, however, I hope that no one will begrudge me my enthusiasm.

+++++

Gary Coughlan

{November 14th}

Hit me and my mailbox with more *Blunt Instruments*! I'm really not into S&M but who better than the wielder of *Blunt Instruments* would know that? Okay, no more *BI* jokes! [Thank goodness.]

This is a beautiful publication, both on the eyes and what it is saying and promising to deliver. After a dearth of new zines, *BI* is just what the hobby needs.

I am honored that you would want to trade with me, and I accept as long as you agree to make it equal. By that, I mean you will be publishing every four weeks while I now publish only five times a year. So, let's trade for the five issues and I'll pay (see the check—you should be seeing lots of them in the coming months!) for an additional five so that we can be relatively equal through 1987. Okay? This way, when my *BI* sub runs out, I'll send you another check for five issues and receive the remaining five as part of our trade, for 1988 and so on. I have roughly the same setup with Cathy Cunning, which reminds me, it's great to see a 'zine in Chicago again!

I would like to sign up for a *BI Diplomacy* game too, and could you please put me in a game with Steve Hutton and require that all players handwrite their orders? You'll never know how much I appreciate this! I'll be a standby, too.

I did enjoy the con in Vermont, but I heard nothing about you becoming a publisher. You were a great GM in the the blind Gunboat game, but I didn't have to stay at the board; that wasn't a requirement! The night before, we had played another Gunboat game and Mike Barno had stayed at the table years after he had been eliminated and we had several jokes about that, so I couldn't let him outdo me. I was really amazed that three people thought that I was Germany instead of the eliminated Italy of years before.

I didn't know that you knew Polish, either, or I certainly would have used you that Vermont weekend. I sent a postcard from Vermont to a Polish correspondent of mine who know very little English. Let me explain some more about him....

I came into possession of a postcard from Poland written in English requesting company brochures and the like. I assumed that not many would write to this guy, so I did, sending along those little index-sized cards to mail and which often come in the mail. I looked up a few Polish words, but my letter was, of course, in English.

Several weeks later, I received a letter from this guy in Poland and it was all written in Polish. After trying to translate it roughly with the aid of dictionaries in the library, I turned to the

library translator service (there are two Polish translators here in Memphis) and got this letter which I'm sending you a xerox of, translated.

[Actually, Gary, you sent me a photocopy of the original, rather than the translation.]

In it, so I was told, Ciezak Zbigniew is a 17-year-old student and he had been sick. I was the first correspondent he had ever had and he was specifically interested in brochures on model airplanes and motorcycles. He lives in Bychawa, which is near Lublin. Perhaps you'd like to write to him. My translator, Bernard, said he thinks that someone else (probably a teacher) reads him my English, just as Bernard reads me his Polish. I know next to nothing about the type of hobby that he is interested in, and since you both know Polish and come from the wider wargaming hobby, you would have much better contact.

[I should point out one thing. Despite the fact that he has written "Ciezak Zbigniew" in his letter, his name is certainly "Zbigniew Ciezak," as "Zbigniew" can only be a first name, and I have never heard of anyone's first name being "Ciezak." The practice of listing the surname first is common in Europe when writing official correspondence, and is especially required in Poland if one deals with the bureaucracy. I'm not exactly certain why this student would use this format in a letter to you, but my guess is that his schooling (which, in a rural place like Bychawa, is probably not as comprehensive as it would have been had he lived in a larger city) has drilled the idea into his head that when writing to anyone other than a close friend, the last name should come first. Also, use of a first name in Poland implies extreme familiarity, so I expect he didn't want to seem to familiar. On the other hand, he addressed you as "Gary," so I don't know.]

Bernard the translator was really something. He asked if I had ever been outside of Memphis and seemed surprised when I told him Korea, and several countries in Europe. He said that when he's asked that question to other Memphians [!], they say things like "Yes—Arkansas or Florida."

[“Memphians,” eh? Care to guess what the adjective is (in English) for residents of Warsaw? “Varsovians.”]

He also seemed surprised that I knew a lot about Polish history, and even where it was on the map and what territory the country had encompassed at various times in its history. He told me that Poles can easily understand the Slovaks but not the Czechs. That type of knowledge fascinates me. Have you read *Sophie's Choice* or seen the movie? (If you've seen the movie, was Meryl Streep's Polish really good?) It's by a Southern author, William Styron, and in it he compares the history of Poland and the South. Very interesting.

[I didn't read Sophie's Choice, though I did see the movie. Meryl Streep's Polish was excellent. Not only that, but her Polish accent in English was extremely well done. It is very difficult, once one has learned to say something in one's native language, to then imitate the difficulty which a foreigner has in saying it. I understand that Streep worked closely with a Polish coach to train the accent. The result was very realistic.]

Do you know anything about Cieszyn (Teschen)? I mean, any landmarks that are in it or the type of area it is in. I'm not interested in the Polish-Czech quarrel over it, but what it would have been like in 1779 when the Peace of Teschen was signed.

[I don't know much about Cieszyn now, and would know even less about what it was like two hundred years ago. All I can tell you is that it is up in the mountains, and that the area in general is quite beautiful. I have been in the Tatras several times, and I would dearly like to go back.]

I'm sending you the last issue of *EE*, which you might have seen in Vermont (#54), but I'll have the trade begin with #55, which should come out in December. I'm also enclosing two pages about the 'zine, to explain the explainable, as it were! Only the subzines have changed (and the cost/frequency of the 'zine).

[I just happen to have copies of those two sheets, Gary. Sometime last winter (probably around January) I wrote to you for a sample of EE. In response, you sent me a copy of #50 and the explanation sheets. Impressed as I was (and believe me, I was impressed), I didn't have the \$12 to spare right there and then. As was typical of me at the time, I never got around to subbing once I had enough spare cash. I certainly regret it now (though I'm delighted at the thought of getting EE on a regular basis). I ended up reading #50 so many times that I have it almost memorized!]

Well, I guess that's it—no, one more thing. I'm doing a World War I chronology, and if you have any details on the Poles during that time, I'd like gladly put them in. I have things about

Paderewski (whose name I misspelled in the January 8, 1917 entry!), Pilsudski's arrest, and the Two Emperors' Manifesto in November 1916 and the like.

[I meant to include some things for the chronology with this issue, but I didn't get the time I thought I would have. I'll be certain to get it to you before you next issue.]

What I think is fascinating is how Poland became a new nation in 1918 and had to put together a nation from Germany, Austria, and Russia. Only recently did I discover that Poznan (Posen), the former German section, had a separate customs barrier within Poland for several years after the war. I imagine having to weld together a new currency, out of three, and new parties, from three nations. Such an interesting time, and I've never found a really good book which goes into the details in English. Do you know of one? Most history skims over World War I and its aftermath.

Well, it's time to depart so I'll say...

do widzenia.

P.S. And always remember, Bruce, that the *ty* [you] doesn't have to be literally expressed in order to get the message across. A simple *Jak sie masz?* [How are you?] will do. Ha ha!! (Another tidbit from Bernard!)

[If you haven't read it already, Norman Davies' God's Playground: A History of Poland (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) is the definitive English-language work on Polish history. It comes in two volumes, and presents Polish history in a thematic, rather than chronological, manner, which makes it very readable. Leszek Kolakowski gave it a glowing review in the New York Times Book Review when it was first published.

[Three other works might interest you as well. They are:

Watt, Richard M. *Bitter Glory: Poland and Its Fate, 1918-1939*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979.

Roos, Hans. *A History of Modern Poland: From the Foundation of the State in World War One to the Present Day*. Translated by J.R. Foster. New York: Knopf, 1966.

Riekhoff, Harald von. *Polish-German Relations: 1918-1939*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971.

[The first one is specifically devoted to the period you are interested in. Watt is not a historian by profession, so the book is more of a popular history than anything else, but he manages to avoid much of the oversimplification and factual inaccuracy that plagues other popular accounts (of anything). It was written as a real labor of love.

[The second is a much broader work, although you will find an excellent section therein on the interwar period. Roos is an expert, and the fact that the history begins with the re-establishment of the Polish state means that he spends some time laying the historical foundations for his account, which just happen to correspond to your area of interest.

[The last is a very specialized work, but since it relates to a facet of the interwar period, it might interest you.

[Professor Davies, by the way, recently became embroiled in a very sad dispute. Apparently, he had applied for a professorship at the University of California, Berkeley, this past summer. Many of the professors in that department, however, are Jewish, and the department voted to deny his application, making a public statement that the reason for his rejection was that the department took exception to the fact that Davies had "let the Poles off the hook," as it were, regarding Polish complicity with the Nazis in anti-Semitic activities during the Second World War. Several Polish-American groups started a campaign on Davies' behalf, urging members to write to the University, and so on. Quite a sorry state of affairs, if you ask me.]

{November 17th}

Trust you've got my letter and my agreement to trade with *BI* by now! You should be very proud of what you've accomplished. Don't be puzzled if the checks don't come pouring in right away; people are often procrastinators. I remember when I did my zine and sent it to my

friends—I was genuinely shocked when several waited until the second issue was almost due to even let me know that they had received it. This is one reason why I always try to write to new pubbers right away if at all possible.

[Thanks for writing so soon. Your letter was quite an ego boost. I think that the first two contacts I had regarding the 'zine (your letter and Hugh Christie's telephone call) did more to shore up my flagging confidence than you can ever imagine!]

A few things I forgot or could have done in my last letter. I have an excellent suggestion for a European trade for you. It is a German zine called *Sauris Allstar Unlimited*, jointly run by Christoph Schunck and Thomas Franke. Mostly in German, they have several sections in English, a letter column, and run a wide variety of games including International Diplomacy. Thomas has asked me in the past to recommend good North American zines who might be amenable to trading, and your stance seemed to indicate that you'd welcome such a trade. *[Absolutely correct.]* You wouldn't be disappointed. Both Christoph and Thomas write excellent English (and speak it, as I know since I've met them both)....

Also, Simon gave me a copy of his vegetarian chili recipe (he had marked out certain sections as you see), so here is a xerox of that for you. If I have room in the upcoming *EE*, I intend to print the recipe.

Well, I guess that's it again. I love your open-page format, which I prefer even though my own zine is digest. I print more complete letters than I used to but I'm a believer in excerpts. Sometimes it's a matter of economy.

Dave McCrumb

I would be happy to trade with you; with *The Razor's Edge*, *Stab-back*, *Control*, and *Xenogogic* all folding, my trades were cut in half.

[What's this? Xeno folding?? Why doesn't anyone tell me these things? At any rate, I'm pleased that you will trade The Appalachian General for BI. I had never seen a copy of TAG before, and it was quite a pleasant surprise when I found out how good it is.]

I must warn you that *TAG* would probably be classified as a warehouse 'zine—while it does have a few extras from time to time, it is done mainly for the games. Evidently, I am becoming very well-known by word-of-mouth. *[Small wonder.]* Every month I get three to five inquiries from people who had *TAG* recommended to them by someone else.

My policy with trades is to send them as a group every third issue unless the trader is in a game, or requests to see it every issue. In other words, you would get #38, #39, and #40 after #40 is complete unless you choose one of the above options.

If you are interested in playing, I open games only every 18-24 months, so now is the time to do it.

[It's just my luck, too. Unfortunately, with schoolwork and the 'zine, it would be downright foolhardy of me to start another game right now. I'm currently playing in two games in Frobozz (one of which just started), and I'm in the "Advanced Diplomacy" variant in Praxis, as well as "Rather Silly Dip" in Costaguana. Once one of these ends (I'm on the verge of elimination in one of the regular games in Frobozz) I'll see what my prospects are. I hate to pass up such an opportunity. Sadly, I think I'll have to.]

How do you print *BI*? Is it done on a laser printer? Also, what software are you using? I ask because my wife just got a royalty check from Ballantine, and we are going to get a computer and a printer. I expect it to help me tremendously in putting out *TAG*.

[It certainly should! Please see this issue's installment of Macintalk for a discussion of my word-processing and printing setup, as well as some general chat about computers.]

[Does your wife write? (stupid question, obviously) What sort of writing does she do?]

Steve Langley

Thank you for *Blunt Instruments*.

Let me briefly say that it is generally excellent. You need have no worries about how well it will be received. And now that I've told you the good news, let me pick a nit or two in hopes of helping you make a good product even better.

Don't denigrate yourself so much. [Aw, Steve, I try not to, but I'm so stupid and worthless that I can't help it.] An occasional touch of modesty is fine, but your insecurities are not founded in what you show and only tend to detract rather than enhance. You are obviously quite intelligent and, as a student of Slavic languages originally from Warsaw, quite interesting as a person. Accentuate that you are rather than putting yourself down—please.

Why have two letter columns? You do, you know. [Yes, unfortunately.] One for general topics and one for political topics. Since you don't plan to chop/edit letters (a decision I thoroughly applaud) you will find it difficult to decide where to place most of the letters you receive.

[I admit it—I unwittingly put myself in a box last time. If I plan to keep letters whole (which I do), deciding which column to put them in would probably become impossible and unfair. Consequently, please take note. The Soapbox will henceforth be my place to pontificate on socio-political matters. Responses will be printed in The Courier with the rest of the letters.]

[You are mistaken, however, when you say that I will not edit letters. I will, in fact, slightly alter letters when they violate the rules of English grammar.]

More personal interest stuff! I always enjoy reading [Conrad] von Metzke's articles on classical music despite having no real interest in music at all. I do have an interest in movies and books. Most of your readers will enjoy reading about your interests even if they do not immediately share them.

[You asked for it, Steve. From now on, BI will be entirely devoted to tracing the development of Russian epic poetry from the medieval period through Pushkin, and the examination of the connections (or lack of them) with Polish and Czech literary development. Well, not really. Point well taken, though.]

I am a systems analyst and have two PC's and can't do a thing for you. Sorry, but I don't have a Mac and have yet to learn C. Such is life (i.e. it is big).

Now, a real nit or two. Your houserules grate on me. Your controversial NMR'ing units rule may cause you problems. [I anticipated this.] I'd recommend that you check it out with the BNC and a few past BNC's before you use it. [Done.]

The thing that really grated was the "hold & support" definition. I see things differently. There are two sorts of GM's in the world: those who make things easy on themselves by being "strict" with their players and those who make things easy on their players by taking a bit more burden on themselves. I agree that there is a lot of nonsense about "hold & support," but I also feel that your decision to consider such units as doubly ordered is part of that nonsense.

Still, I don't have to play, and there should be room enough for all points of view.

Do check out that NMR order rule, though, before someone challenges it.

[I must disagree with you on the "strict" GMing question, and very strongly at that. I don't know exactly what you mean by "strict" GMing. I can take that either to mean someone who is very limited in what he allows to succeed, or simply one who spells out exactly what will and will not be allowed in his games (in the form of "comprehensive" houserules). I do admit that the two generally go together, but it is entirely possible for a GM to be rather generous in what he allows while still making his houserules cover every eventuality.]

[Frankly, I do not see how anyone can object to the GM who takes the time to explain to the players exactly what his rulings will be in a given situation. Every GM has limits as to what he will and will not accept, and writing this down is actually a favor to his players, as they will always know what to expect from the GM in a questionable situation; no player should have nasty surprises sprung on him. There is an interesting comment in Once Upon a Deadline by Peter Sullivan, who states that "It is acceptable to have no houserules, as long as everyone knows what they are." This apparently nonsensical statement was undoubtedly meant to refer to written houserules. Every GM has an idea of what he is going to accept. If one is not going to accept implied orders, not writing this fact down is just asking for trouble, and is unfair to the players.]

[I take you to mean, then, that a strict GM is one requires his players to follow a rigid format in submitting orders and the like. While this does put a bit of extra burden on the players, I question how much this would bother a player who at all cares about the game. If I, as a GM, require players to put each order on a separate line, how much "burden" does this put on a player? At most, it might add a few minutes (definitely not more than five) to one's order-writing. I question whether a player who balks at two extra minutes when actually writing orders (I make a distinction between deciding upon orders and actually writing them down) should even bother

playing. After all, how much time does it take to write a good negotiation letter? Certainly not four minutes. Yet players will object when a GM denies them the slightest shortcut in writing their orders.

[In a certain sense, my view is clouded by the fact that I was originally just a wargamer. Playing a relatively straightforward pbm game of The Russian Campaign, for example takes much more effort when it comes to simply writing down where units move to and what the odds are in each attack. This is not including the effort expended in making one's move on the board, which requires a player not only to keep track of the hundreds of counters on the board, but the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy positions, often hex by hex, and the odds created by his attacks. While Diplomacy has its own time-consuming and mentally-taxing requirements, players seem to be less willing to fulfill them (like writing a proper letter of negotiation, or maintaining diplomatic contact with more than one country after 1901).]

[My other observation is that the status of the GM in wargaming is different from that of the GM in postal Diplomacy. In wargaming, the GM is often considered to be doing a service to the players (not unlike a favor) by running the game. The results of the game are simply reproduced in a game report sheet rather than a 'zine, so the GM doesn't have the luxury of expounding on whatever he fancies himself an expert on; the game adjudication is often all that a GM has time for with some of the larger wargames. In this sense, the GM is not challenged on his rulings as often, and one doesn't get the adversarial relationship that I have too often seen in this hobby (although this can be due to the fact that most wargames have much more comprehensive rules than Diplomacy).]

[In this context, then, writing clear, unambiguous orders could be seen as a simple favor to the GM. Why make the GM guess what a player means? While it is true that the GM often derives as much fun from the adjudication as the players do from playing (at least I do), I don't think it is fair for the GM to have the responsibility of deciphering a player's orders. Sloppy adjudications are universally frowned upon—why should sloppy orders not be? Players avoid sloppiness in their negotiations, as it would hurt their chances of winning, but the fact that sloppy orders make life harder on the GM seems to bother some players not one bit. I guess this dichotomy is what really bothers me: the acceptable level of effort in a Diplomacy game seems to differ between orders and negotiations. If a player is serious enough to spend several hours a month writing letters, why aren't two extra minutes of writing orders acceptable? And, if a player isn't even willing to spend a reasonable amount of time negotiating, why play Diplomacy at all?]

Marc Hurwitz

What ever caused your tiny mind to conceive that I, North America's supreme *Diplomacy* dipper, would want to waste my precious time glancing at the tedious garbage you have the gall to call a zine! You petty fool.

BREAK BREAK: MR. HURWITZ, PLEASE CONSIDER YOU MAY FACE MR. GERYK IN A DIP GAME SOMETIME.

Oh yeah—you're right about that. Thanks.

Ahem. As I was saying, Bruce old boy, I loved your zine! Superb editing, swell humor *especially your disclaimer about filler* good production values. Much as I would like to subscribe, right now I'm doing all the postal Dip I can handle, and I have no intention of burning out.

MUCH BETTER, MR. HURWITZ. NOW SAY SOMETHING NICE ABOUT HIS LETTER.

Yeah, ah, Bruce—about your letter—nice stationery. I like your typing, too—much better than mine, as you can see.

MR. HURWITZ, I WAS REFERRING TO THE CONTENT OF THE LETTER, NOT IT'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE.

Well listen, you oaf—you don't even know the rules behind apostrophes. You should have said "its," not "it's," when referring to possession, as opposed to a contraction of "it is."

MR. HURWITZ, IS IT REALLY NECESSARY TO AIR OUR DIFFERENCES IN FRONT OF MR. GERYK?

Oh—sorry about that, Bruce. Thanks for the compliments on the series in *Praxis*. I have a new article coming out on the question of using Fleet Denmark to keep Russia out of Sweden in Fall '01. Usually it is a bad idea. As far as "Pat Redthorne" goes—it wasn't me. First, I never use aliases. Second, I never discuss politics in Dip zines. At the last DipCon, just for fun, I started a heated lunchtime debate between Brux and some others and the table on the subject of abortion. It was fun to listen to. I never revealed my opinion on the topic, though—just listened to the others argue. I hope I left everyone with the impression that I agreed with them, though.

P.S. The reason that I use a P.O. box is that the doctors here at the sanitarium censor my mail.

[While I generally omitted letters which declined subscriptions or just complimented the 'zine in a few lines, I made an exception in Marc's case, as his letter was simply too funny to leave out.]

Dick Martin

Here's a sample of *House of Lords*, a dipzeen dedicated to the art (?) of publishing a dipzeen. If you have any questions, comments, or desire to participate, let me know! The more diversity we can come up with, the better the zeen will be, and I'd be glad to have you as an active participant.

Ken Peel lent me his copy of *Blunt Instruments*, so that I could marvel at your laser printing. Very pretty, that's for sure! I just went to the laser look for my two zeens in the last month after a couple of years of Imagewriting. My only complaints are that I don't have easy access to a LaserWriter, and that the system I end up using arranges the pages differently than my Mac at home. Just plain weird. Any idea why it might do that? I'm still a laser novice, though I've had my Mac since early '84.

If you know Pascal fairly well, then C should be a breeze. The two languages are very similar, though C has more of an assembly-language approach. "The" C book is by Kernighan and Ritchie and is simply titled *The C Programming Language*. A must for any C programmer. I prefer Pascal, myself.

xLISP isn't too bad. In fact, you can't beat it for that price! Really, LISP is a neat language for small specialized tasks, but not useful in a general sense. If you want, I'll send you my LISP interpreter when I finish writing it (it's a class project), if I decide to do it on the Mac (though I'm not going to do any menus or such). If nothing else, it'll help you appreciate xLISP!

I appreciate *Balance of Power* as a work of art, but I can't say much for it as a game. I'm barely able to make it through the first year, much less win. If you know anybody who actually wants to buy the game, they can have my copy cheap.

The game to avoid at all costs is *Strategic Conquest*, particularly if you're a wargamer. If you play it, you'll be hooked, it's that simple. And now I understand that you can play a live human over Appletalk...oh my. Maybe I'll pry my copy loose from Ken over winter break when I have time to play again. It's simply the best computer wargame I've ever seen.

But Mr. Peel is our game aficionado. He got his Mac as a game machine, and only now is finding out how useful it can be!

P.S. I've played *Awful Green Things* by mail. It works just fine!

Richard Hurley

Congratulations on an extraordinary effort. I've been waiting for someone to sense the possibilities of the Mac/LaserWriter combination for Dip 'zine publishing, and here you are. More refreshing still, you seem to have something to say with your fancy tools. Carry on.

I can't imagine how you expect to carry through with all your commitments, but then again, I remember college as a time of stretching oneself thin (we're talking microns here), and half the fun was seeing how much you *can* do. So I look forward with interest to see how your 'zine progresses.

You have put yourself forward rather fully (but modestly) in your opening issue, so perhaps this letter can take the form of a responding introduction.

My name is Richard Hurley. I have a small design and build practice in the Northern California Sierra foothills. I have an enduring love for writing, and an absolute need for living in open country. Cities, for me, are brutal necessities, made tolerable by the occasional healthy flowers of wealth—like great bookstores.

History is my fascination. I love to watch the (basically) identical human animal respond to the varying tests of different times and places. My reading at the moment centers around Germany in the last hundred years, but I cannot claim this as a serious focus. Rather, it is the mean or central subject in a rather broad look at twentieth-century Europe.

I have been following the *New York Review's* plunge into the Central (or Eastern, or *Mittel*) European troubles, and I find the subject very interesting indeed. Russian military dominance will not overcome centuries of antipathy, I suspect, so the problem will continue to seethe until some new equilibrium is achieved. A fascinating play of cultural versus military power in the meanwhile. I look forward to your insider's views of the matter.

To resume the introduction...I went to Harvard as an undergrad in the bitter years of the late 'sixties. (I wish I could try college again sometime when the nation isn't on the edge of civil war—it would be a lot easier to concentrate on all the intriguing things in the course catalogue.) I did my graduate work in architecture at the University of California at Berkley, in the late 'seventies.

As to my involvement with games...I have always loved them, but have almost never had the time to indulge this love. Hence postal *Diplomacy*, which has the cardinal virtue of being flexible in its demands on your attention. I am currently in Spring '02 of my first game, and am enjoying it greatly. *Diplomacy* offers considerable opportunity for those who enjoy writing and theatre, and if your 'zine attracts such people, the I would be interested in joining the festivities.

So here are ten of my dollars. Please sign me up as a Great Power, and hand me a *Blunt Instrument*.

Your opening issue touched a number of topics of interest which work pressures will not allow me to discuss at this writing. Perhaps as the game(s) unfold, we can exchange information about computers (a growing interest) and films and books.

I enclose a few flyers from the Societa Machiavelli of Nevada County, of which I have the dubious honor of being founder and chief historian. Unfortunately, we have been able to mount only a few serious games, but the will to lie, cheat, and steal our way to the top remains, ready to spring forth again at the right occasion. I should note that I have several noms de Dip (or Machiavelli), and that one of these is Richard, Cardinal Sarducci.

Until the next issue, then. Best of luck with your 'zine, and may the angel of student overcommitment light on your shoulder and grant you understanding profs.

Fred Chang

Hi! Thank you for the delightful packet which I received today. I just finished reading *BI*'s number *jeden*. I enjoyed it very much. It is an ambitious zine which I hope will continue to be as lively as this premiere issue. (I've also been inspired to start a zine by *Once Upon a Deadline*, but there are still too many variables. I want my job to settle down so I can tell if I'll always be as busy as I've been since I got <interruption—phone call> a new boss.)

I'm sort of looking for a home computer (a nice IBM clone w/printer & modem ≈ \$1000) as I no longer have time at work for the Wang word processor for personal correspondence. Even though work is 20-25 minutes away, I don't like to leave home on weekends. Here I live in the midst of Melrose Avenue (the trendy street) in Hollywood and I hate to drive. My roommate and I are pretty provincial for living in a metropolis. I have three wonderful dogs: Winslow, Klaus (for Braundauer, the great Austrian actor), and Sprite.

I'm just training myself back to correspond in writing. I work in the Publicity Department for Embassy Home Entertainment. I write press releases, select stills, and put together press kits

and the like. I'm actually *forcing* myself to write as my inclination (now) is to find it repetitive to start from scratch for each letter.

I almost bought an IBM system w/printer, but Gary (my companion) and I went to a computer trade show, where I realized that the system I almost bought was not the best deal (potentially the most convenient); I can get more for the same price if I do some research. (I am not a born shopper—except for major purchases; I hate comparing prices, models, etc.)

If you're interested, read *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Stern. Written in the 18th Century, it's a delightful "anti-novel" full of digressions.

I visited Europe last May, and went to Hamburg, Berlin, and Warsaw. I was so bored in Berlin, as my pen pal there is nice but not exactly into the same things as I, and he had to work, and I almost came home early. But I called home and talked to my roommate who had talked to some friends of mine who said that I would be crazy to do that; of anything, I should change all plans and go to Amsterdam and London.

I thought about it, but felt that I should go to Poland after all, since I had said that I would. I had called my friend Piotr (who speaks English) with great difficulty. (Later I learned about the phone system in that country and how there is a four-year waiting list to get a new line, unless you have connections.) So I went and I was glad.

My friend was a constant tourguide, interpreter, and social director. It was a lot of fun. I took a train from West Berlin into Warszawa Centralny [*the main train station in Warsaw*] and arrived there at midnight. I wanted to take photos from the train, but this was my first outing into the Eastern Bloc (except for the train from Hamburg to Berlin) and knew that this was forbidden. At one point during the ride, I realized that the Deutsche Reichsbahn line (East German train) had become Polish. The attendants searched through my luggage and spoke little German (not to mention English). This was weird as I know some German. I was hungry and went to a Polish dining car and realized that I would have some problems. I ordered *szynka* (and got it, with very dry bread), the only word I recognized, even though I don't normally eat ham. The attendant wrote the price down, as I didn't know any numbers (my class had taught me mainly grammar—conjugations, declensions, etc., and nothing of a practical nature), but I quickly learned during this week.

We stayed two days in Warsaw, went to Gdansk/Gdynia/Sopot for two more days before returning. Then we made a day trip to Krakow, Piotr's favorite city [*and mine!*]. I had a fascinating trip, and plan to go back the next time I visit Europe.

Do you know anything about AMSTRAD's word processor? My roommate thinks I should get one since this is all I seem to need, and it costs less than a PC. I don't know—I still want a PC. I think I will have lots of use for it, but at this point all I need is a word processor.

Ken Peel

Thank you for the inaugural issue of *Blunt Instruments*. I enjoyed reading it very much. In fact, the only detraction for me was your constant depreciation of your abilities and the quality of your 'zine. C'mon—make *BI* what you want it to be; do what you are interested in, and don't worry about comparing yourself to other publications!

Okay, the trade is on. Did you ever request a sample issue of *Politesse* before? [No.] Not that I can remember.... As you can tell from the enclosed, *Politesse* is not really a postal dipzine at all, but is a primarily locally-oriented ftf 'zine covering a variety of multiplayer games. The December issue will be out in a couple of weeks. I'll send you that one as well. If it is really not your cup of tea, just let me know, and I'll send you as sub for *BI*. No hard feelings—in fact, since I run the 'zine off myself, requiring hours of sorting and stapling (our sub base is now approaching 100), I prefer not to hard sell the 'zine to anyone who doesn't really make use of it one way or another.

To reiterate, don't be so self-conscious about what you want to do with the 'zine. Just do it. All in all, *BI* #1 was one of the best inaugural issues I have ever seen.

As one of the biggest fans of *The Awful Green Things from Outer Space*, I say *Green Things* Forever! [Right on!] Now, if I can only find a place to get myself a set, I would be in seventh heaven. Dick Martin has played *AGTfOS* by mail, and he tells me that it is easily done between two players. They just take turns moving. I don't know how it might work with a GM, though, as it doesn't really lend itself to simultaneous play. But if you could move the game at

two-week deadlines for each player, a full round of turns would still get done each month, and could be reported such in the 'zine (although the game might have to be run directly by flyers to keep it moving at that clip—or at least for one of the players).

Macintalk: keep it. You see, I am a three-month-old proud owner of a Mac+ myself. In fact, this letter would be suspisciously Mac-like, if not for the fact that I am stream-of-consciousness typing it out on my typer at work. The LaserWriter is an amazing machine when teamed up with the Macintosh, isn't it? I am in the process of producing and 3rd edition of *Masters of Deceit*, the other novice package (other than *Supernova*, that is), and it will be laser printed. I figure I'll go over to Capitol Hill Kinko's for the printing. A lot of copy services are getting into the business of desktop publishing services, and that can only mean good news for dopey Mac users like me. In fact, Dick Martin has switched over both of his 'zines (*House of Lords* and *Retaliation*) to laser printing. Although at 40¢ a page it costs more to produce the originals, Dick figures that not only does it look prettier, but that it saves him money in photocopying and mailing in the aggregate from the 'zines former Imagewriter incarnations. Maybe you two will be setting a trend. For now, though, *Politesse* will remain a non-Mac hodgepodge production, because that way Ed does most of the work. Hey, I'm not stupid.

Sorry, though; I know absolutely nothing about programming, or even how the machine works. The beauty is that I don't have to!

[Alas, that may be the machine's biggest drawback, in my eyes. After all, it is conceivable for a machine to be too user-friendly. Back in the good old days when only geeks used computers, it took quite a bit of time to familiarize oneself with a particular machine. I remember spending hours learning the basics of MS-DOS. While it may have taken some effort, by the time I felt really comfortable with it, I had a basic idea of how the machine did what it did. Now, with these menus and all the other fancy shortcuts, anyone can sit down at a machine and start typing.]

[Please don't get me wrong—I think it's a good idea (and a long-overdue one at that) to demystify computers to some extent. They have too long been the domain of the few who had the time and inclination to unravel their complexities. Unfortunately, I think that once computers become readily usable by everyone, regardless of training, they could very easily get out of hand. One thing that scares me a lot is the idea of using something while not having any idea how it works. Once you let that happen, you put yourself at the mercy of an unknown which, in many people's minds, is akin to magic. I once spent several hours rebuilding a damaged disk with Fedit for someone who wasn't aware that hexidecimal notation existed. What happens when our beloved machines start malfunctioning, and the only thing we can do is stare dumbly at their screens?]

Re: *Balance of Power*. An absolutely terrific concept for a game. Too bad it is so boring. To be frank, I can't believe the thing has gotten such rave reviews. It's interesting as a simulation concept and for its educational value (?), but tedious-to-tears to actually play. Hey, that's just my opinion, but I think all the positive reviews out there of the game come from knee-jerk liberal reactions (as one reviewer admitted) than from an honest evaluation of the play of the game.

[Why? Because the game shamelessly portrays geopolitics as nothing more than trading lives for power? An interesting revelation, yes.]

[I do agree that the game requires patience to play, but then again I am biased when I say that I don't mind. Have you ever sat through a turn of Drive On Stalingrad while the other guy was making his move? Talk about boredom....]

Well, that should do for now. I've got to get back to work, as in a half hour the Foreign Relations Committee will be holding a hearing on the Iranian arms deal fiasco (yea, sure it had nothing to do with the hostages...). Maybe next time I write I'll have something to add to *The Soapbox* on your comments on the Senate elections or some such thing.

Larry Peery

I was disgusted by the first issue of *Blunt Instruments*. No one, *no one!!!* has the right to put out such a disgustingly perfect first issue. It's intolerable. The hobby won't stand for it. And neither will I.

Humph!

Well, now that I have your attention.

I'm sending you a copy of the XXth anniversary issue of *Xeno* so you can see what you have to look forward to. But, as you will read, no trades for the moment, unless you want to trade back issues of *Xeno* for future issues of your 'zine. That would be a switch. I have 22 or so issues dating back to 1981 on file so let me know.

I note you are not a subber to *Diplomacy World*. [Yep.] You should be since that is where my efforts are now going. We've done pretty well considering the state of the 'zine a year ago. I hope you'll join us. Alas, DW doesn't exchange subs with the other 'zines (purely for financial reasons). I've enclosed some info on DW for you.

[*Er, I think you forgot that last part, Larry, as none arrived. The reason that I have not subscribed to DW is that I was forever short on funds. I suppose I will now get around to it, seeing that I have the money to publish this thing.*]

Please accept one bit of advice from one hobby old-timer: TAKE IT EASY. You have set yourself a very high standard. Maintaining it will be hard. But if you do you should have a fine 'zine.

Slavic languages and literature, eh? You must immediately write the Rev. Brian Bailey and send him a copy of your 'zine. Brian dates back to the mid-60s in the hobby. He is an Episcopalian minister and doing his doctorate at Fuller. He was a Slavic specialist at Berkeley. He's also a swell guy. I'm sure you two have much in common.

Alas, I am not so brilliant as you. I studied History, Political Science, and Religious Studies in school. My specialty was crisis management and decision-making under pressure and I emphasized communist countries in that area, dealing with succession problems in the USSR, etc. My thesis dealt with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in the 1960s. My others dealt with a history of jet fighter planes, and the requiem as a musical form. Well, what can I say—I've been playing Dippy for over 20 years, i.e. over half my life. Yes, I am crazy.

I don't play much any more and I'm sure you've heard more than enough to bore you to death about my hobby activities. But it is true, we do have a Beethovencon every year. Forty-eight hours of games and forty-eight hours of Beethoven. Nice combo, eh?

I don't know about all those games but if you get a game of *Cold War* going I might bite. And I'm not playing anywhere.

[*I'd love to. Unfortunately, not enough people share your desire to play Cold War. There was some other interest expressed, though, so I haven't given up.*]

Okay, big deal, so you like the oboe! See, one person knows who Heinz Holliger is. [His mother?]

I consider most hex games to be shooting crap games, nothing more. But....

I don't know a thing about computers. I have a staff member (heh, heh...) who does all that stuff for me. But we are expanding. Everybody in the hobby is getting a computer so we have gone one up on them. We just acquired our own radio station. Yes, "*Diplomacy World* on the Air" will be debuting during Beethovencon. Eat your appendix out.

Do you know Pete Gaughan, down in Texas? [Just recently had the pleasure.] He pubbed his own excellent 'zine, *Perelandra*, for some time and he just folded it. Your 'zine might make a good home away from home for him since you two seem to have much in common. He's a very bright, literate, human sort of soul. But he is Irish. You ought to hit off very well together.

Humm...on to other things. What do you think of the music of Penderecki? Are you familiar with the works of Karel Husa, such as the *Music for Prague, 1968*.

[*Penderecki is fantastic. Husa is something less than that.*]

Anyway, I'll give you a plug in the next DW. Keep up the good work. And best wishes....

Simon Billenness

I was impressed with your new zine, *Blunt Instruments*. How did you manage to keep the launch such a surprise? It's an excellent first issue—literate, chatty, well-produced, with a pleasing dose of politics. It's just what we need in America right now—a liberal *Praxis*!

I hope you don't print letters in their entirety. Most hobby letters, mine included, are hurriedly written, while their author watches TV or anxiously glances over his shoulder to see if his boss has returned from lunch. Consequently, letters have little flow, being merely random thoughts, inspired as the author flips aimlessly through the zine in question. Often, whole

paragraphs are cut off because the writer gets distracted and forgets the flow of his argument. I would give you examples of this, but I've just returned from my lunch-hour shopping and I've lost track of what I wanted to say. Nevertheless, I do urge you to be flexible in printing letters. Some letters are composed of flowing, pure prose, which would be violated if it were hacked to pieces. Most, however, are just written as a series of separate, distinct paragraphs, like this one. In other words, feel free to chop up my letters....

[Very well. The next three paragraphs of Simon's letters have been cut from this column, and placed in the "Houserules Forum" section, except for the third and sixth sentences in the second paragraph, which have been incorporated into my essay on opera, and the fourth sentence in the third paragraph, which has been scattered randomly throughout the rest of this zine... Seriously, Simon, I do agree with you, up to a point. I would prefer, in some cases, to split letters up between several departments. Two things prevent me from doing so at present: the lack of confidence I have in my editorial abilities, which I am afraid might lead to a deterioration of quality in the letters in their chopped-up form, and my own annoyance at having my letters sliced. Oddly enough, I prefer reading letters in other 'zines when they have been divided up and placed in several different departments, but when that happens to one of my letters, I am slightly irritated. I feel a bit guilty, then, in doing to others what I dislike having done to myself....]

When did you come to the States? [When I was seven.] It must have been at a very early age, because I didn't detect any accent at BRUXcon. I've only been here eighteen months, so I'm still very aware that I'm living in a foreign country. Sometimes when I watch the weather reports, and a map of the States pops up on the screen, my subconscious screams "Wait a minute, I don't live *there*, do I?!" I suspect that with moving every year for the past four years, I've become a little disoriented. We intend to stay in New York City to save up enough money so that we can scuttle straight back to Britain. Cherish me! I won't be here for long....

I've enclosed a copy of the vegetarian chili recipe. Why not publish it? [No room this time. Maybe next.] If you do, please acknowledge the cookbook it came from: *The Moosewood Cookbook*, by Mollie Katzen. It is an excellent cookbook for people who would like to experiment with a few meatless meals. You should be able to find it (and its companion, *The Enchanted Broccoli Forest*) in most bookstores.

Believe me, they are both full of recipes which are delicious as the vegetarian chili, and are written for people who have never cooked anything but frozen hamburgers. The books don't moralise about vegetarianism; they just provide tasty meatless recipes for all meals and snacks.

[Indeed, the most annoying thing about vegetarian literature is its tendency to moralize. I must admit that my tendencies towards vegetarianism are not for moral reasons; rather, I have found that a mostly-vegetarian diet is best for my training program (I run on the varsity cross-country squad). However, I am still amazed by these people who scoff at vegetarians, and know nothing about nutrition themselves. I cornered one guy (a wrestler) on the issue when I asked him why he ate so much red meat ("real man's food," as he called it) and so few vegetables, when the human body is not intestinally designed to digest meat as a staple food, and a diet can be designed which gives people just as much protein without all the fat and sodium. Bill Rodgers goes so far as to say that the only meat he eats is a bit of chicken each day. Still, some people insist that meat is the only way to insure muscle growth. Perhaps they'd care to race a few quarters with me (or 24 miles, for that matter.)]

As for the free issue, could you send it to a friend of mine in New Hampshire, Gloria Jacobs? She majored in Russian and lived in the USSR for six months. She's trying now to become a Slavic librarian. Maybe you two have something in common.

Steve Emmert

{November 24th}

I was delighted to receive the first issue of your zine today, and I'd be happy to subscribe, assuming I remember to put a check in this envelope before sealing it. I'll also take you up on your offer of a free game.

If you're looking for a different game to GM, how about *Kingmaker*? I think there's only one other *KM* game being run now, by Scott Cameron, and you may find some other takers.

[Don Del Grande is also running a game in Life of Monty. The clamor for Civilization was quite strong, however, so I feel obliged to offer that. In the future, though, KM is on the agenda. Definitely.]

I'll write more later regarding your *Soapbox*. In the meantime, you have my very best wishes for your new effort, and thanks for writing to me.

[*Thanks for writing to me!*]

{December 8}

I was interested to read your views of last month's elections. Unfortunately (given my political leanings, I should say *very* unfortunately), it will take far more than this Congress to make a meaningful change from the Reagan doctrine. I believe it will take a two-term, charismatic Democratic president.

The reason I believe this is Reagan's incredible impact on the judiciary. I understand that he has appointed over half of all the federal judges now sitting, and he still has two years to go. Most of them are at the District Court level, but this is the pool from which the Supreme Court justices of the 1990's will be selected. Reagan has also selected these judges more on the basis of political philosophy than have any of his predecessors.

[*I agree with this completely. There are several out there who would make the excuse that Reagan's choices are based on qualifications alone, and that ideology has nothing to do with selection. Right. Even if this business about questioning potential candidates about their political and social viewpoints does not go on (and I believe that it does), Reagan's selections have gotten way out of hand. I wish I had contacted the Nation Institute about their presentation to the Senate on why Sclavia shouldn't be confirmed. That would have been interesting reading, to say the least.*]

How can a Congressman who is periodically responsible to the will of the masses take a courageous stand on a politically sensitive issue when he knows his bill may eventually be scrutinized by a life-tenured justice who believes he has a popular mandate, and maybe even God, on his side?

It doesn't take a Doctor of Juridical Science to see that Reagan may dramatically change America long after he's gone. This is a President who would be delighted to erase *Miranda v. Arizona*, *Roe v. Wade*, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and even *Marbury v. Madison*. And he's made sure that the judges who will be deciding these matters are all company men (and women, I think).

Sorry to sound so gloomy, but the Raiders are getting flattened as I write this (on Monday night, no less), and I'm feeling miserable.

The current court is supposed to be "Nixon's Revenge," and God knows, Rehnquist scares the hell out of me [*me, too*], but it hasn't turned out that way, largely because Lewis Powell isn't as conservative as the Tricky One thought. Reagan has learned from that mistake (and other similar "mistakes," such as Eisenhower's nomination of Brennan and Johnson's of Marshall), and will leave a legacy for twenty or more years after he's dead and buried.

I wish it were as simple as a lopsided Congressional election.

I look forward to the next issue.

[*Thanks for some very insightful comments. I never meant to imply that the Congressional elections were a sign that the "right-wing horde" (not unlike the Golden Horde) had been defeated. I was only expressing relief that the country had pulled up short of becoming "Reagan's America" in the way that Reagan seems to be pushing for it to be. At least Pat Robertson is running. That should be good for some laughs.*]

John Heidemann

I am glad to hear that you want to begin programming your Macintosh. As you can probably tell, I too have a Mac [*John's letter was obviously done on an Imagewriter.*] I've been programming it for a while now in Lightspeed C and am very impressed with that compiler and with the C language in general. As for good beginning books on C, good luck. C is not the easiest of languages, and I haven't found a good tutorial for it. The reference I use is Kernighan and Ritchie's *The C Programming Language*, but everyone I know but myself despises that book. Like I said, good luck.

The more I think about pbm *Diplomacy*, the more I think it would be nice to be able to do it without having a board set up somewhere. Naturally, the computer leaps to mind as a good board keeper. Of course, a good *Diplomacy* program would have to have a good background. What is really needed is a Thunderscanned image of the conference map. I have access to a

Thunderscanner, but unfortunately I can't get it to work with my Mac+. Would you be able to scan a conference map? Of course, I don't give any guarantees about the program, but I'd like to give it a try. What I picture is a thing where you can drag little armies and fleets around on a map with all the areas labeled, and games can be saved to disk. Perhaps it will even color in supply centers based on ownership. And then comes the Artificial Intelligence module to handle those pesky NMR's. Well, maybe that one will be a little while in coming, this is all theoretical, just twisted thoughts in the mind of this programmer.

[About the Thunderscanning: I may be able to help, but I'm not certain. The lab where I work does not have one, and the only lab on campus that does (the computer science Macintosh lab) only allows computer science students to use the Thunderscanner, which makes it completely useless since computer science students have no use for the thing. You must have the old version of Thundersan, which is incompatible with a Mac+. The upgrade is already out, but I have no word on availability or price.]

Have you any experience with modems and telecommunications? *[A little. I have to deal with a Unix system on occasion.]* The other thought I've had about uniting computers and *Diplomacy* is that it seems that a BBS (Bulletin Board System — a computer-operated bulletin board that people call up with modems and leave messages at) would be an ideal playing area for *Diplomacy*. I figure the cost to the players wouldn't be too much, and message turnaround could be a day or two, depending on how often people call. Costs, of course, would vary depending on your distance to BBS, but it shouldn't be too bad at 1200 baud. Anyway, what I'd like to know is about how many *Diplomacy* players have computers and modems and so would be able to take part in such a scheme.

[It has been thought of already. I suggest you contact Ken Hill, 3092 Sawdust Lane, Dublin, OH 43017, who runs a PBEM 'zine called The Armchair General. I am not familiar with the 'zine itself, but others who are assure me that if you want to PBEM, it's worth your time. I believe the BBS is CompuServe.]

Kevin Tighe

Thanks for the copy of *BI*—it's a great-looking 'zine. It looked so great that I was afraid to touch it, let alone bend it back at the staple.

Would you be interested in trading 'zines? *RC* doesn't look like much, and it's not, but I thought I'd make the offer. It usually runs 3-5 pages. My main goal is to offer fast-running three-week games. *RC* also shows that, like Tom Wolfe, English is my second language. Unfortunately, I don't have a first language.

Please sign me up for one of the free games, and let me know about the trade offer.

[The watercolor tree sold me. I love RC. Unfortunately, I am really afraid of taking on any more trades, as I will probably lose enough money as it is. I'll tell you what, though. You're in one game here. Let's call it a trade for as long as your game runs. When that ends, we'll see what my finances are like, and go from there.]

You covered a lot of ground in *BI* #1 so I'll just skip around randomly.

Your mention of Kundera and Forman caught my eye. My maternal grandmother emigrated from Czechoslovakia when she was four (with her family, of course), and despite my Irish name I'm still one-half Czech. [??] I haven't seen *Firemen's Ball* or read *Life Is Elsewhere* but I will, someday. I believe Forman's only other American films are *Hair* and *Ragtime*, both quite good. Love to learn about other Slavic authors and filmmakers.

[And so you will. Next issue.]

[Forman also made Taking Off.]

I heard about *Balance of Power* last year. It sounds very involved and a lot of fun. Is it possible to end the game without a nuclear war when playing the computer? Does the world ever become stable?

[BOP is indeed very involved, and some people see that as its main drawback. One has to deal with the entire world each turn, and that takes time. It involves a lot of mouse-clicking and menu-pulling, but I still maintain that it's worth it. The object is to go from 1986 to 1993 without provoking a nuclear war (and get a higher score than the computer). I have never gotten beyond 1987.]

Awful Green Things has been played postally (in *Down the Tubes*) and went rather smoothly, but count me out. I played it at a con and got wiped out in three moves by a ten-year-old! Don't ever want to see it again.

I don't see any reason for multi-page houserules. The rulebook is clear enough. A page should pretty much cover special postal rules including weird NMR rules. Your "2¹/₂ Commandments" explain your policies quite well.

[I'm sorry, but I'm slightly confused. When you refer to "postal rules," do you mean "rules by which the game is governed when playing by post" or "rules which are conveyed to the players by means of the post"? If the latter, do you mean that if I sent a set of Kharkov rules to your players by mail, they would have to abide by them when playing Diplomacy? Also, your houserules instruct players to "read the rulebook." However, you do not specify whether or not they should follow it. Such loopholes can be the downfall of an otherwise well-written set of houserules. I suggest that you rewrite yours slightly to account for these possibilities. Twelve or thirteen pages should do just fine.]

[By the way, I have heard that Prof. Bruce Linsey has been invited by the University of Chicago to teach a houserules course here in the spring, entitled "How To Overstate the Obvious and Still Have People Question You About It Afterwards."]

Linda Courtemanche

Many thanks for the note and the sample of *Blunt Instruments*! It is an astounding first issue, and if one day you wake up and can't find your Macintosh, it will be because I have stolen it.

[If you can get away with it, please be my guest. I really wish I owned one of these, but I guess this unlimited access deal is good enough.]

Steve and I wish you all the best with your pubbing (how do you manage with college, anyway?! [Well might you ask.] I know I couldn't have done it), and enclosed is a sub check for your next three issues. (I'd make it for more, but I'm overextending myself as it is with subs, and I want to make sure I leave myself time to really respond to each issue as I like to.)

Thanks again for writing, and feel free to write for *High Inertia* anytime. Hope to see you again soon (there's talk of another Vermont con in the spring), and Happy Holidays!

*[Thank you. *High Inertia* is indeed a first-class publication. I can't promise that I'll be able to contribute much, but I'll certainly try!]*

[Count me in for another Vermont get-together.]

Ted Davis

Just got your first issue of *BI*! Super! I'm glad you sent it, although I'm sorry to hear I'm on the "Fresh Meat" list. I was hoping to keep my novice entry into Dipdom (*postal*, that is) a secret!

Like you I became familiar with *Diplomacy* though other wargames. You referred to my two favorites in your *BI* profile section: *Bulge* and *Russian Campaign*!

The enclosed article I'm sure will be of interest to you, if you haven't seen it already. I got it out of the Avalon Hill *General*, vol. 22, #4. I don't subscribe to the *General*, but I'm sure the article came out in early 1986. This article is all there was about Poland or GROTEKA.

[I do remember the article. Unfortunately, it came at a time when most of my Generals simply went unread. I hadn't even noticed when I first read the article that there was a second page. Thank you for sending it.]

You say you used to live in Michigan; Hamtramck by chance? I was raised in Hyde Park!

[I lived in Waterford.]

I had to buy a new *Diplomacy* game as the one I bought back in 1972 (big beautiful board, nice box) was destroyed in a flood. When I bought the new one, in the box was a Games and Parts Price list published by AH, effective Feb. 1986. In there they have a "Discontinued Parts List 1986." It lists *Source of the Nile* for \$50. I'm not sure if the whole game is available, but it also lists several game parts (e.g., mapboard, event cards, crayons, etc.) for various costs. Once again, I hope I'm not boring you with stuff you already know!

[Yes, I am aware of this, but I thank you for mentioning it anyway. The price quoted is outrageous, especially since I was able to get a mint copy in exchange for ten issues of BI.]

On that subject, I have two *Guadalcanal* games at my mother's house in Hazel Park. They are CHERRY! I played one once and the other hasn't even had the counters punched out yet. [!!!] I bought them at least ten years ago, when I saw them in some obscure toy store, way out in the Permian Basin of West Texas! They looked like they had been sitting there since they came off AH's assembly line. Price? \$6.95 each! I snatched them both up! I've been holding them ever since, just bidding time! Interested? [Very.] How interested?! [Please name a price for the unpunched copy.]

Your NMR rule sounds good to me. [See opposing views in this issue.] But what do I know? (snicker) Also, please send the rules to "Rather Silly Dip." I'm not one for variants but what the heck?

Well, that oughta do it. No comments for the *Soapbox*, but I do love the "chatter."

Jack McHugh

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of your new zine. Yes, I am interested in finding new zines to read and subscribe to. I found your zine to be very interesting and entertaining. You've convinced me this is a zine I can't live without; therefore, I'm enclosing a money order for ten bucks.

Don't apologize for the zine; despite all of the administrative stuff, I still found it fun to read! I also thought that it was very thought provoking. Despite your disclaimer, I also found you very articulate, although I do not make this claim for myself or my letters. (This is a hobby. I try to be articulate, but I do this for fun and fame, not fortune.)

I guess to be fair I should tell you a little about myself. I am a M.A. candidate at the University of Penn in International Relations and I have a B.A. in Modern Languages (Russian and German) from Villanova University. Right now I'm writing my Master's dissertation [*thesis?*] and looking for a full-time job.

Unfortunately for you, most of what I know of literature is Russian literature—Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoi, etc. etc.—and what I know of American literature is what I have read on my own. For example, I love Gore Vidal's historical novels (*1776*, *Burr*, *Lincoln*, *1876*, and *Washington, DC*) but I read these for pleasure as opposed to reading them as part of a course.

[*Why is it unfortunate for me that what you know of Russian Literature is what you have read on your own? You read it—great. I see that what you have read are nineteenth-century works. For an intriguing contrast, try some modern Russian writing. One author you should definitely try is Vasili Aksyonov (The Island of Crimea and The Burn have been translated, so far as I know.) As far as Vidal goes, well...oh, never mind. It wouldn't be nice.*]

As for my musical taste, I'm pretty much of a top forty guy. I do like offbeat electronic music, like OMD or Laurie Anderson. When it comes to classical—well, the less said the better.

[*Orchestral Manœuvres in the Dark? You have excellent taste. Anderson is good, too, but I tire of that stuff rather quickly. There is a lot of potential there (and a nucleus of good material), but too much of it is repetitious.*]

I also read a lot of science fiction and I subscribe to *Analog*.

I do have a real passion for politics and political issues. Although I consider myself a left of center Democrat (yes, there are still a few of us left!), I also like to hear from the other side. (Well, I usually do, and I do believe that they have a right to make their case, even if I don't believe a work of it.)

I have a question for you: How long were you on the "other side"? [Seven years.] I will say one thing, speaking as a third generation American (Irish-Italian), who does get tired of people who speak with foreign accents trying to tell *me* what it means to be an American and why America has a God-given right to tell the rest of the world how to behave. I am curious about the psychology of such people, like yourself, who come from behind the Iron Curtain. Especially those who have an uncritical love of Reagan and the West. Don't get me wrong; I love this country and wouldn't trade my citizenship in for anybody else's, but I am also secure enough in its greatness to admit that it is not perfect. Unemployment, homelessness, bigotry, poverty; these are all as much a problem and part of America as the American dream. You can come and end up

living on a vent somewhere. Anyone who tells you otherwise is either someone with a skill in demand (like a doctor) or a fool (or a liar, or both).

[One of these days I will try and explain why so many Eastern Europeans end up swallowing the conservative line. It will be interesting, I can tell you that.]

I never thought that Reagan had the mandate for his policies that he claimed he did. If you'll notice the polling data, even at the height of Reagan's popularity, his conservative policies (on gun control, abortion, school prayer, rights for homosexuals, etc. etc.) were rejected by the American people. Now Reagan's love for covert affairs (a love shared by the entire conservative community I might add—We're America, whatever we do is in the name of democracy and against communism, so it must, *de facto*, be not only okay, but good!) is coming home to roost!

Don't believe the Reagan party line, that the press (the conservatives' favorite whipping boy), caused the collapse of what happened in Iran. The captors of the hostages made the whole thing public in their Syrian-subsidized newspaper to stop the pressure from their Iranian friends to release the hostages. In a sense Reagan is correct; he wasn't trading arms for hostages, but he was trading for influence to get hostages. This, to me anyway, is almost the same thing. Indeed, it is almost a semantic difference. Especially coming from a guy who had the nerve to criticize Carter's dealings with Iran in 1980!

[You said it. The Poles have always loved Reagan for his tough-guy tactics, and I'm sure Trybuna Ludu is going to be ecstatic about the chance to show him as a liar and a windbag. It's really a shame.]

As for other games, how about *Machiavelli*? I'd love to play that by mail.

[Sorry, but I don't own it. It is on my list of games to buy (along with Advanced Squad Leader, but that has been there for quite a while. Had there been more interest, I would have considered buying it right now. However, Civilization is it.)]

One more thing: I take it you don't like America's sports or you are not a sports fan? I saw no mention of Baseball, football, or hockey. (I capitalize baseball because it is *the* sport as far as I am concerned, although I do like football and hockey.) This is not intended as a criticism or even to say you should cover sports. I just wanted to know. I realize sports are not everyone's cup of tea.

[I was wondering how long it was going to take for someone to figure out that I am something less than an avid sports enthusiast. I love soccer, but the North American game is pathetic, and I am restricted to watching the rebroadcast games from England. I also like hockey, but, once again, I think that the North Americans have something less than a mastery of the game. It is a real pleasure to watch the Czechs play (as well as the Finns).]

Bruce Linsey

I'm going to tell you something I've never told any other publisher. Your first issue was *the best* debut issue of a zine I have ever seen. It was unbelievable! You keep this up, and you might just start putting mortal publishers to shame. Not only was the print quality as good as anyone else's, but your sense of layout is superb, the writing is masterful, and most of all, the content of the issue is consistently interesting. It's an honor to be your first subscriber. And you'll have me on board as long as both *BI* and I are alive, mark my word.

I might possibly be able to pick you up a new copy of *Source of the Nile*. Last time I visited Duane's Toyland in Schenectady, NY, I *thought* I saw this game on the shelf. Let me know what maximum price you're willing to pay, and I'll check it out over Christmas vacation. (Sorry, I can't help you with *Empires*.)

[Thanks. SOTN is taken care of, thanks to the kind offices of Claude Morest.]

My favorite item in your issue was the con review. Your writing is straightforward and clear—a pleasure to read. It's not an easy thing to summarize a game like *Survive* so concisely as you did. And only I know deep down whether I'd have let you starve on your trip back to Chicago (by *not* treating you to lunch first) had you not been getting set to publish. I mean, the motivation of a couple of free issues dangling in front of my nose—and the prospect of being your first subber—*assured* you your lunch that day. Had you not had any plans to publish, you'd have been wise to make up a story that you were, else the ol' BRUXer might have starved you to death. You never know about me....

I'm looking forward to your story of how *Once Upon a Deadline* helped you get *Blunt Instruments* rolling, but let's not overdo the modesty, eh, chief? You and I and everyone else knows that you'd do a spanking fine job, handbook or no handbook. But if the thing actually gave you (or anyone else) a neat idea or two in getting started, why, great—that means the effort was worth it.

You mentioned that you'd like to run a non-*Diplomacy* game. On the phone you didn't make it sound too hopeful, but would you consider *Empire Builder*? The game plays very well postally, and I'll bet I can round up eight players (me and seven others) for you. Ah well... postal *Civilization* should be fun to watch too (and take up less room...).

[Sorry, but I don't see EB being housed here in the near future. I have no doubt that you could get me seven other players, but I have several other reasons for not running it. Space is one; the amount of room EB takes up in Trax & Loose Caboose is too much for this 'zine. Also, the game is run on two-week deadlines, and I would feel a bit pressured in my adjudications. I am toying with the idea of offering it later. For now, three Dips and a Civ are enough, thanks.]

Your editorial policies really impressed me. I agree entirely with your aversion to the practice of chopping up people's letters into icky, gooey masses and then mashing them all together for print. To me, that's sort of like taking a plate full of meat, potatoes, carrots, and mushrooms, putting 'em all in the blender, and... oh, never mind, the sentence was about to get gross. But I'm glad you're running people's letters whole and undigested. Nuff said.... And I'm pleased to see that *BI* won't be a home for feuds too. [What is a feud?]

I share your interest in wargames, but the only ones I actually play are the very simple ones like *Victory in the Pacific* and *Midway*. The more complex ones are worth the price just to spread out on the floor and contemplate, but for the life of me I can't see how anyone could actually play, say, *The Next War* or *The Longest Day* (campaign scenarios) to conclusion. Mind you, the concept fascinates me: recreating history in painstaking depth, and then experimenting with hypotheticals about how it might have happened (or how events might happen in the future). It's the execution I find difficult to grasp.

[I have played Next War to conclusion. We left it set up at the house of a friend of mine (which happened to have a spare room) and played it out over the course of a summer. The biggest danger to the game ended up being the cat, who wanted to use the table for naps.]

I wish I had more time right now, Bruce. I told you I'd try to have this letter in the mail on Saturday morning, and now it's late Sunday night. It's a feeble excuse, but I've spent much of the past few days househunting. Tomorrow evening I'll be putting in an offer on a very nice mobile home I've found, and if it's accepted I expect to be moving by the end of January. This has left too little time for writing letters. But wish me well in my new home-to-be! And Bruce, congratulations on a stunning splash into the ocean of publishing.

[Thank you, Bruce.]

(continued from "Houserules Forum," p. 9)

I think this scenario is slightly more probable than the ones you postulated, Andy. In any event, the real issue here seems to be that determined defenders will not NMR, and those who do deserve what they get. It is true that I consider NMR's to be "aberrations" of a sort, but I am not interested in "smoothing out" the effects. I would rather prevent them. In this sense, I am prepared to mitigate their effects in an attempt to protect those who are unjustly hurt by them. If you ask me, one NMR due to a postal screw-up is enough induce me to take defensive measures.

I welcome any other views on the subject, as well as amplifications of these. I should point out that as of yet, I have not heard from Steve Heinowski, so the whole question could be moot if he decides that the rule makes game irregular. Still, the rule seems worthy of debate, irregularity or no, and I'd like to hear what you have to say. I only wish I had more time this issue to expand upon the ideas presented.

OTHER JOURNALS

(such as they are)

It seems that there has recently been a flurry of new 'zines (this one included, of course) in the hobby. This seems like a good time to plug the ones with which I'm familiar. When asking for samples from these gentlemen, please remember to include stamps. Lord, do I need stamps....

Over There is a fantastic idea for a 'zine. Its publisher, Hugh Christie (43 E. Houston St., Montgomery, PA 17752), is the faculty advisor to the Montgomery Area Junior-Senior High School Diplomacy Club. The 'zine provides a contact point with the postal hobby for the club members, and gives them the chance to take advantage of an archive of 'zines which Hugh hopes to establish for the club's benefit. *OT* runs quite a few games, and provides a letter column for the discussion of (primary and secondary, I assume) educational issues. Already three issues old, *OT* avoids taking itself too seriously, which puts it one up on me.

The Abyssinian Prince is Jim Burgess' long-promised jump into the big time. Jim's interests seem to be music, music, and music, so if you like music you might be mildly interested. Jim's comments are nothing less than fascinating, even to a novitiate like me. From what I can discern, *TAP* will run no games; that honor will be reserved for his "companion gaming subszine," *The Boob Report*. Anyone interested in highly literate chat and willing to occasionally contribute to it is urged to send Jim a stamp at 100 Holden Street, Providence, RI 02908-5371. Contributors will be charged the low, low price of 25¢ a copy, and I have nothing but envy for Jim for being able to afford that.

The Volcano City Times is a pleasant little journal from Rory Noble (436 S. 10th Street, St. Helens, OR 97051), which will apparently be devoted mostly to games. Indeed, the rewards for the music trivia quizzes which he plans to run as ongoing contests (hear that, trivia fans?) will be free VCN gamestarts, so players seeking a 'zine with this emphasis should take note. A small (five-page), well-done effort, even though the editor has publicly admitted to enjoying *Dungeons & Dragons*....

in case you're interested...

As long as I'm plugging 'zines, I should mention two pieces of news which I've become aware of. First of all, Jim Burgess is resigning his post as Orphan Service Custodian, effective as soon as he can find a replacement. Apparently, both Orphan Service Assistants, Steve Langley and Scott Hanson, would prefer not to take over, so Jim is currently taking applications from anyone who is interested in the job and feels that he or she is qualified. I would hope that some experienced hobby member takes this position over, as I feel it is one of the most responsible spots in the hobby. The Custodian must find homes for games which have been orphaned, sometimes when the publisher refuses to part with them but is obviously not going to print any more issues. Such situations require tact, patience, and courage, and I thank Jim for the assistance he gave me in housing the orphan I took on. Someone out there has some pretty large shoes to fill....

Secondly, it is PDO Auction time. This event is held annually to raise funds for hobby services such as the Boardman and Miller Number Custodians, the Orphan Service, and the like, which are often run too much out of the Custodians' own pockets. The catalogue is included here, and anyone with a sense of fun and a few extra dollars should consider bidding on *something*. There are items up for auction which should appeal to dipsters of all sorts. After all, who could pass up an *autographed* picture of Melinda Holley? You can bet what I'm bidding on!